Library of The Theological Seminary

PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY

PRESENTED BY
The Estate of
The Rev. John B. Weidinger

BV 4501 .S63 1911
Speer, Robert E. 1867-1947.
A Christian's habits

A CHRISTIAN'S HABITS

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAY 25
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Christian's Habits

BY
ROBERT E. SPEER

PHILADELPHIA
The Westminster Press
1911

Copyright, 1911, by

The Trustees of the Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work

Published April, 1911

PHILADELPHIA, WITHERSPOON BUILDING

New York Chicago San Francisco

St. Louis Nashville

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE 7
THE PLACE OF HABIT 9
THE HABIT OF PRAYER 15
THE HABIT OF DUTY. I 23
THE HABIT OF DUTY. II 29
THE HABIT OF DUTY. III 35
THE HABIT OF GOOD THINKING 42
THE HABIT OF WISE SPENDING 50
THE HABIT OF HOPEFULNESS 61
THE HABIT OF DOING THINGS NOW 70
THE HABIT OF HIGH-MINDEDNESS 77
THE HABIT OF HIGH-MINDED LOWLINESS 85
THE HABIT OF NOT DAWDLING 92
THE HABIT OF DECISION 98
THE HABIT OF FINDING THE WILL OF GOD 107

PREFACE

"AND he entered as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day."

"And as he was wont, he taught them."

"And went, as his custom was, unto the mount of Olives."

"The Father . . . hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him."

These were some of the habits of the Lord. He had habits, as each man must have, as God himself has; for do we not read of "the ways of the Lord"? Is this not ever the earnest man's prayer, "Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths"? Indeed, it was to be the blessing of the latter days that they would fulfill this prayer. "And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

This little book is an effort to discover and describe some of these paths of God which are to be the habits of his children.

THE PLACE OF HABIT

LIFE is a school of habit. There is a real sense in which our business here is simply the acquisition of habits. We start with certain inherited tendencies and capabilities and these certainly do affect our choices, and the choices grow into our habits; but whatever the bias for good or evil with which we start, we are not bound by it. How often we see a good ancestry shamed in some bad son, and a bad ancestry exalted by some good son! Whatever the bias with which we are born, and the pressure of our surroundings upon us, and however much excuse is to be found in these for the wreck of some lives, it is still true that we order our own ways and that we order them by the character of the habits we choose to acquire.

We begin our work in this school when we begin to live. At once upon beginning to live we begin to act, and each act makes its repetition easier, so that we are more likely to duplicate that act than to perform a new one. No one needs to teach us to form habits. We do it by reason of our

nature, of which, as Carlyle said: "Habit is the deepest law. It is our supreme strength, if also in certain circumstances, our most miserable weakness. Let me go once scanning my way with any earnestness of outlook, and successfully arriving, my footsteps are an invitation to me a second time to go by the same way. It is easier than any other way. Habit is our perennial law —habit and imitation—there is nothing more perennial in us than these two. They are the source of all working and all apprenticeship, of all practice and all learning in the world."

The law of habit is not a dead mechanical law. It is simply the government of God applying to all life, giving stability and order and firm principle to it. It is the assurance that we can keep the results of our efforts and experience, that there is an end toward which we can move and that we are not to be left alone to be molded by nothing, or to be molded by events and circumstances which are more powerful than we. "The truth is," as Edward Bowen, one of the great English schoolmasters wrote in an essay on "The Force of Habit," "the truth is not that events mold us, but that we mold our-

selves: that is, if with reverence it may be spoken, the Creator supplies the instruments, and we have the work to do. Whether our work be a cheerless, solitary task, a forlorn and unaided toil, or whether in no single action are we destitute of a guidance above ourselves, Plato did not doubt, and we shall not: but that it is in this way that we shape our being, and in everything work toward an end, Scripture and reason prove." Habit is God's assent to the finality and responsibility of our acts.

If it were not for habit, we should never have time or strength for any advanced living. "If an act became no easier after being done several times," says Dr. Moudsley in "The Physiology of Mind," "if the careful direction of consciousness were necessary to its accomplishment on each occasion, it is evident that the whole activity of a lifetime might be confined to one or two deeds—that no progress could take place in development. A man might be occupied all day in dressing and undressing himself; the attitude of his body would absorb all his attention and energy; the washing of his hands or the fastening of a button would be as difficult to him on each occasion as to the child on

its first trial, and he would furthermore be completely exhausted by his exertions." We can make headway upward in our life struggle because each step is secure. We do not need to go back to do it over again with the same effort. We can go on from it easily to another step in the same direction.

Of course, the law of habit, like every other law, is like a two-edged blade. It cuts both ways. The good that we have done once, we can do more easily the second time. The evil, also, that we have done once we can more easily repeat. "I know from experience," says John Foster in his "Journal," "that habit can, in direct opposition to every connection of the mind and but little aided by the element of temptation (such as present pleasures, and so forth) induce a repetition of the most unworthy action. The mind is weak where it has once given way. It is long before a principle restored can become as firm as one that has never been moved. It is as the case of a mound of a reservoir: if the mound has in one place been broken, whatever care has been taken to make the repaired part as strong as possible, the probability is that if it gives way again, it will be in that place." The

law of habit is meant to be a blessing to us in making us masters, not a curse in making us slaves.

In the religious life, habit is meant to play a great and blessed part. "In the great majority of things," says Foster, "habit is a greater plague than ever afflicted Egypt: in religious character it is a grand felicity." By it we are set free from many conflicts which we had to wage earnestly at first but in which the habit of victory became so fixed that we are no longer aware of those conflicts. The foes whom we meet are still with us, but we give them no more thought than we give to the earth we walk on, and without which we could not stand up and walk forward. By habit also, what was at first hard and perplexing has become natural and simple. Surrender to Christ and the subordination of our personal ambition to him, once difficult, is now joyous. The lower has been subjugated by the higher. "When the missionary desire came in and took full possession of my heart," says the veteran missionary, Griffith John, "the lower desire was driven out and driven out never to return again. That was a great victory, one of the greatest victories ever won on the

arena of my soul, and one for which I have never ceased to feel truly thankful to God." And the virtues and activities of the after life are sweet to us in their full sweetness, and secure and trustworthy only when they have become, as they may become, habitual.

We should begin to acquire these habits at once, the earlier the better. If we do not learn to love God in our earliest years, and to trust him and to pray to him, if we do not become familiar with the Bible now, and now acquire a love for purity that will not look upon evil, it may be too late when in after years we turn to these things deciding to make them then habitual. While no one need ever despair, it is true, as Professor James says, that habit "dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again." The kind of Christian we want some day to be, we must begin to be to-day.

THE HABIT OF PRAYER

THE most vital of all the habits of a Christian is the habit of prayer. This is the test of spiritual reality and strength. The man whose principles and character can be exposed to God, who loves to go to God, and who, though aware of his weakness and sin, ever rejoices to be searched through by the light of God in the fire of his presence, cannot be false. The man who does not seek and bear this testing of prayer, has no such sense of his own sin, of the reality of God's forgiveness and power and of the nearness of his presence to man, as will make his word to his fellow-men of deepest effect. "Without much solitary communion with Jesus," says good Dr. Maclaren of Manchester, "effort for him tends to become mechanical and to lose the elevation of motive and the suppression of self which give it all its power. It is not lost time which the busiest worker, confronted with the most imperative calls for service, gives to still fellowship in secret with God. There can never be too much activity in Christian work, but there is often disproportioned ac-

tivity, which is too much for the amount of time given to meditation and communion. This is one reason why there is so much sowing and so little reaping in Christian work to-day."

It is just as important that praying should become a habit with us, as breathing or eating or sleeping, or dressing in the morning. If these things did not become habitual with us, life would soon break down under the burden of doing them.

But they are all made natural and almost unconscious to us by practice, so that we do them all instinctively. Prayer, of course, can never become a habit which needs no attention, for prayer is the fixing of the attention upon God; but it can become perfectly natural for us to do this, so natural that every instant our hearts will turn to God, referring all things to him and seeking his strength and peace.

Those who are not in the habit of prayer at all times are not likely to make use of prayer even in special times. In very great crises, of course, they will probably do so. Even men who pay no heed to God and renounce prayer are likely, in the time of mortal peril, to pray. When the steamship Spree

broke its shaft some years ago while crossing the Atlantic, with Mr. Moody on board, and the passengers realized their danger, men who had shown no interest whatever in religion joined the group around Mr. Moody who prayed. But it is the men who habitually pray who know how to pray in such emergencies. If we learn from our earliest childhood to pray daily and hourly there will never come a time when we cannot turn to God with natural friendship and assurance, and tell him our wants and desires.

For prayer is just converse with God, and all conversation requires practice. If men do not talk to one another, they lose the taste and faculty of conversation, and so, also, if men do not talk with God, they will not acquire the love and power of prayer. We can make constant converse with God the habit of our lives. We are more likely to do this if we think of God as Father, as Jesus encouraged us to do. If we think of him as some strange and distant monarch, or as a vague, pervasive spirit, we shall feel no disposition to speak to him as a man would speak to his friend, but if we realize that he is our personal Father, and our inseparable Companion, we shall naturally turn

to him to share our pleasure in each new joy of life, our delight in all that is beautiful, to thank him for every blessing, to seek his guidance in every perplexity, and his comfort and help in every sorrow and need.

Such a habit, as Dr. Maclaren points out, is not inconsistent with work and energy. It is the best stimulus to work, and the great fountain of energy. It is the men of prayer, like Chinese Gordon and Stonewall Jackson who were the great soldiers. As Gordon wrote to his sister:

"I believe very much in praying for others; it takes away all bitterness toward them. . . . If a man makes an arrangement with his fellow-man, the greatest honor to him is to consider that arrangement as effectual and final. So it is the great honor to our Lord to believe his word. It is not presumption to claim the fulfillment of his promises; it is a comforting thought; indeed, it is peace, for we place our burden on him, who is both willing and able to bear it. The prayers of the patriarchs were most simple; they took God at his word, that is all.

"I like much this style of prayer, and recommend it to you: to plead with Christ to look after his own members. He knew all

about those members, when he undertook the covenant. Surely, if he bore the punishment of our sins, as he did, he is not likely to neglect the fruit of his work. Why, the fact of his not doing so would be the triumph of his foes, and would be virtual failure; and we know that he could not fail. I am delighted with the prayer; I only realized it lately—indeed a few days ago; before that it was misty. I now ask him in some way to regulate matters for my earthly members, for they also are his. I really believe we shall enter the resurrection life by such prayers, and die to the world."

And Jackson's biographer says of him:

"He prayed without ceasing, under fire as in the camp; but he never mistook his own impulse for a revelation of the divine will. He prayed for help to do his duty, and he prayed for success. He knew that

> More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of;

but he knew, also, that prayer is not always answered in the way which man would have it. . . . Jackson's religion entered into every action of his life. No duty, however trivial, was begun without asking a blessing,

or ended without returning thanks. He had long cultivated, he said, the habit of connecting the most trivial and customary acts of life with a silent prayer."

And in the time of peace as well as in war, the man of prayer is the man of action. His prayer is work. It effects things. No one felt this more than General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the founder of Hampton. "Prayer," said he, "is the greatest thing in the world. It keeps us near to God—my own prayer has been most weak, wavering, inconstant, yet has been the best thing I have ever done. I think this is universal truth—what comfort is there in any but the broadest truth?"

The earlier we can acquire the best habits, the better. As soon as children can talk, and even before, it is time to begin with them. But whether or not the habit was begun with us then, we have something to do ourselves, now, in strengthening it. We must have our set time, morning and evening, by grace at meals, by united prayer with others for the settlement and confirmation of our habit. And we need to associate the thought of prayer and to cultivate its practice with all the various experiences of life.

The time that we so often cannot spend in any other work can be profitably spent in prayer—the hours while awake at night, and the moments during the day when often we can only sit still and pray. Maurice's wife said that she never knew her husband to wake up at night without praying.

The habit of prayer will be strengthened with all of us who will remember to pray after as well as before the events and experiences of life. Often we need to pray even more after some victory than before. We shall probably remember to pray after our defeat. Our humiliation and sense of need will drive us to God in shame of weakness and desire for strength. But when we succeed we often forget God, and are content with what we think we have power in ourselves to do. In truth, we have no power in ourselves to do what we ought. All our power is of God, and it is suicidal to cut ourselves off from him—the one Source of life and righteousness and power.

No habit of Jesus' life is more evident than his habit of prayer. It must have been begun in his earliest boyhood. It was the great comfort and strength of his life. We may not be able to make it mean to us what

it meant to him, but without it we shall never find what he came to give—the life of strong, steadfast duty-doing, of love and peace and joy. Let us set about acquiring it now, and practice it every day and every hour.

THE HABIT OF DUTY. I

ONE of the most wonderful things in the life of our Lord was his habit of duty. How large a part it played with him is concealed from us because the word is so seldom used in our English translation of the Gospels. The English word "duty" occurs only five times in the King James Version, and but once in the Gospels in the words of Jesus. "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." But the absence of the term does not indicate the absence of the idea. Again and again the thought of duty is expressed by Christ when he says, "I must." That is not a verbal mood, but a separate word which might as appropriately be translated, "It is my duty." "It is my duty to be in my Father's house," was the first expression of the noble consciousness which was to dominate his career. When his ministry began and the enthusiastic people of Capernaum would have kept him for their local prophet, he replied, "It

is my duty to preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent." As the work of his public ministry absorbed him, he said solemnly, "It is our duty to work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." The great missionary duty of the divine love lay especially upon his heart and to this and the sacrifice by which it was to be accomplished he often referred. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also it is my duty to bring." "It is the duty of the Son of man to suffer many things, and be rejected . . . and be killed." And the two great ideas are combined with the implication of the Church's duty in the words of the Lord after his resurrection. "It was Christ's duty to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day; and [it is your duty to see] that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations." From the first to the last a lofty sense of duty sustained the Son of God.

The life of Paul was dominated by the same principle of duty. It was so in his anti-Christian earnestness: "I verily thought

with myself that it was my duty to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Nothing turned him aside from what he believed to be the path of duty. His conscience was serene on this point. He was ready to admit afterwards that his moral judgment had been terribly wrong in those days, and when he afterwards discovered how wrong it had been, he made every reparation in his power, but he never regretted having made duty supreme. And as a persecutor, so as a missionary he bent his life with absolute devotion under his conviction of duty. "What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart?" he remonstrated with his friends in the house of Philip the Evangelist, in Cæsarea, as they sought to dissuade him from the path of duty. "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die." With him it was anything for duty.

It must be so with us. A rigid sense of duty is the noblest thing in life. It is nobler than love. For in its lower ranges love is tinged with selfishness, and when it rises above these ranges and is pure, untainted by any requirements of return, it melts into duty and becomes and remains the loftier love by virtue of the preservative purity of

duty. Only duty can put eternity into love and lift it above all the vicissitudes and disappointments and betrayals of time. And, in fact, the Bible always grounds love upon duty. In it as in God, right is the supreme thing. God is love because he is right. And we are bidden to love because we ought. Duty and not affinity is the lofty motive of the soul. This was our Lord's teaching. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." But what is it to love him? "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you." And the supreme duty he laid upon his disciples, the commandment he called "new" was the duty of love. "And this is his commandment," says John, "that we should . . . love one another. . . . If God so loved us, it is our duty to love one another." Love is not a mood or a caprice. It is a duty. It gets its greatness and its sovereignty from the soul of duty which is in it. There are sensitive souls which have tortured themselves because they could not serve from a sense of buoyant and joyous love. Christ does not ask it. He asks us to do our duty in the strength of God. We do not need to want to tell the truth, or to be unselfish, or to go as foreign missionaries.

It is good if we do feel a spontaneous joy in duty. But that is secondary. The duty is the supreme thing and the doing of it will produce the right feelings in time. If it does not, it is of little consequence, if only we have done steadily and honestly what it was our duty to do. For this, as it is the noblest element and the highest motive, is also the one adequate rule of life, "What is right?" "What ought I?" This and not temperament or taste, which may or may not be what they should, is the complete law of life and action and being.

Obedience to the law of duty is the only way to clear up all our intellectual confusion and perplexities. "Most true is it," says Carlyle in a familiar quotation, "as a wise man teaches us 'that doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by action.' On which ground, too, let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to us was of invaluable service. 'Do the duty that lies nearest thee,' which thou knowest to be a duty. Thy second duty will already have become clearer." This is certainly a law throughout life. If I have doubt

as to my ability to learn to swim, I can never resolve the doubt by standing on the bank and arguing about it. It can only be cleared away by my going into the water and making the effort. And so in higher things. I can never settle the question of the existence of God or the truth of Christianity, by speculation. Even if I am satisfied that the results of my speculation prove the existence of God and the truth of Christianity, both God and Christianity will still be unrealities to me without action. I must venture out upon God. I must put Christianity to the test of life. I must do my duty. And if I do my duty, even if my speculations may have baffled me, I shall issue forth at last. Whoever will do right for right's sake and follow this as a consuming principle will come through to God who is the Right.

THE HABIT OF DUTY. II

DONE steadily, as the law of life, duty prepares men for whatever tests life may bring. These tests, which are God's examinations of the soul, come without forewarning, and we may say reverently that there is no cramming for these examinations of God. "The man's whole life preludes the single deed." We do in the crisis what the hidden principles of our career have foredoomed. There are doubtless exceptions, some real, some apparent, where a profligate life has flowered in a glorious self-sacrifice. But shirking duty in the common is no preparation for its performance in the exceptional, and the man who meets his crisis when it comes is the man who made it sure he would meet it by the solid steadiness of his common duty-seeking and duty-doing. This is the path to power and to whatever greatness God has in mind for us. The writer of some dialect reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln draws out this lesson from the early crisis in that great, plain man's life:

"I hadn't been watchin' him sweatin' his

brains on that question (of slavery) for four years without knowin'. I tell you nobody that didn't see him often them days, and didn't care enough about him to feel bad when he felt bad, can ever understand what Abraham Lincoln went through before his debates with Douglas. He worked his head day and night tryin' to get that slavery question figured out so nobody could stump him. Greatest man to think things out so nobody could git around him I ever see. Hadn't any patience with what wa'n't clear. What worried him most, I can see now, was makin' the rest of us understand it like he did. . . . I'd figured out by that time that Lincoln was a big man, a bigger man than Stephen A. Douglas. Didn't seem possible to me it could be so, but the more I went over it in my mind the more certain I felt about it. Yes, sir, I'd figured it out at last what bein' big was, that it was bein' right, thinkin' things out straight and then hangin' on to 'em because they was right. That was bein' big, and that was Abraham Lincoln all through—the whole of him."

Doing duty in the small is the road of a man to character. Fret and tempest die out in the life which is solidified and calmed

by duty. Consequences may be what they will—of what consequence is it? Our course has been set for us, our star has been given us to steer by. The unseen Captain knows the rest.

"The more we see of life," wrote Chinese Gordon from Shanghai to his sister in 1880, "the more one feels disposed to despise one's self and human nature, and the more one feels the necessity of steering by the Pole Star, in order to keep from shipwrecks; in a word, live to God alone. If he smiles on you, neither the smile nor frown of man can affect you. Thank God, I feel myself, in a great measure, dead to the world and its honors, glories and riches. Sometimes I feel this is selfish; well, it may be so, I claim no infallibility, but it helps me on my way. Keep your eye on the Pole Star, guide your bark of life by that, look not to see how others are steering, enough it is for you to be in the right way."

Peace and good conscience come from the unity of the life with duty, with the conception of life as duty, the vocation of God. It is nowhere more nobly put than in the closing paragraph of Trench's "Study of Words," on "vocation":

"What a calming, elevating, ennobling view of the tasks appointed us in this world, this word gives! We did not come to our work by accident; we did not choose it for ourselves; but, in the midst of much that may wear the appearance of accident and self-choosing, came to it, by God's leading and appointment. How will this consideration help us to appreciate justly the dignity of our work, though it were far humbler work, even in the eyes of men, than that of any one of us here present! What an assistance in calming unsettled thoughts and desires, such as would make us wish to be something else than that which we are! What a source of confidence, when we are tempted to lose heart, and to doubt whether we shall carry through our work with any blessing or profit to ourselves or to others! It is our 'vocation,' not our choosing, but our 'calling'; and he who called us to it, will, if only we will ask him, fit us for it, and strengthen us in it."

And, to speak of but one other thing, it is the law of duty which gives beauty to life. Sometimes we doubt. Duty seems harsh and domineering and gray. But it is only seeming.

I slept, and dreamed that life was Beauty;
I woke, and found that life was Duty.
Was thy dream then a shadowy lie?
Toil on, poor heart, unceasingly;
And thou shalt find thy dream to be
A truth and noonday light to thee.

It will be so because beauty is to be found in that which duty is, order, fixed principle, obedience to law.

All these results of duty-seeing and duty-doing are illustrated in the lives of the men who have been known as men of duty. They were seen in Henry Lawrence, whose classic epitaph has nerved multitudes to follow the way he went: "Here lies Henry Lawrence who tried to do his duty." They were seen in Chinese Gordon, whose last letter to his sister sent from Khartum ends: "P. S. I am quite happy, thank God, and, like Lawrence, I have 'tried to do my duty.'" They were seen in the Duke of Wellington, of whom one of Robert Louis Stevenson's favorite quotations said, "He did his duty as naturally as a horse eats oats."

Soldiers are not the only men who have illustrated the iron supremacy of duty. Missionaries have been even nobler representatives because all their obedience to duty was personal and moral. Human love, comfort

and ambition have whispered to them in vain to turn back. Often deep disgust at the life in contact with which they had to live and racial antipathy too deep for any overcoming except the overcoming of duty, have protested, and perils like the soldier's perils have threatened—all in vain against duty. Nearer home the trained nurse is every day enduring and subduing what it is not the mood of sympathy or any impulse which enables her to meet, but duty only. I know of one who was called just after a serious illness of her own to what she supposed was some ordinary case of need, only to find that it was a poor home where three children were sick with scarlet fever and diphtheria. There were no servants. The mother had one of the children with her in the kitchen. The home was unclean. The bed given her was the bed in which one of the children had died and the bed clothing had not been changed. She stayed and nursed the family. Why? For love's sake? Her soul revolted from the experience she was passing through. She stayed for duty and duty upheld her.

THE HABIT OF DUTY. III

A RECENT newspaper article detailing the enormous sacrifice of life in the industrial progress of Pittsburg bore the gruesome title, "Riches Soaked in Blood." In the first five months of 1907 the coroner recorded one thousand and ninety-five deaths, of which three hundred and forty-four came suddenly and violently in the mills and railroads of the city. One life, it was declared, was sacrificed for every fifty thousand tons of coal shipped, one life for every seven thousand tons of iron and steel. Why were these men where death met them prematurely? They were working for the support of their families or were simply busy with the necessary work of the world, and they died where duty placed them and doing what they thought they must. Somewhere along the line of the production of every fragment of the world's wealth is the blood of a man who fell in his duty with no cry to the world for its praise, but taking what came with his duty as a matter of course.

How did duty get the power to dominate

men in this way, and what enables it to assert its power against home and life? Because it is the call of right, and what right bids us to do it is wrong not to do. And right draws its vital authority from God. God is the great personal, living Right, and duty is simply his voice. That is the lofty metaphor of one of our greatest odes. Let each reader turn to his Wordsworth, and read all of the ode of which these lines are a part:

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty! if that name thou love
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring, and reprove;
Thou, who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free;
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

Through no disturbance of my soul,
Or strong compunction in me wrought,
I supplicate for thy control;
But in the quietness of thought:
Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance desires:
My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face:

Flowers laugh before time on their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through thee,
are fresh and strong.

Because duty is the right thing, the will of God for man, it is sufficient. For its own sake alone, it asks to be done. Itself is its own reward. It asks no other, and there is surely something pitiful about our practice in these days of rewarding and decorating men for doing their duty. Why should they not? Is duty something it is wonderful to find a man doing, so wonderful that he should get extra pay for it or be given a ribboned medal? Surely Fielding's words in "Tom Thumb the Great" are nobler:

When I'm not thank'd at all, I'm thank'd enough;
I've done my duty, and I've done no more.

It is simply our duty to do our duty. It is not the winning of a supererogatory merit with either God or man. It is not a matter of reward. And it is not a matter of comparison with other men's achievements. Mr. Maydole, the hammer-maker, was an expert. "I have made hammers," he told Doctor Gannett once, "for twenty-eight years."

"You ought to be able to make a pretty good hammer, then, by this time," was the reply. "No, sir!" came the emphatic answer. "I never made a pretty good hammer—I make the best hammer in the United States." This was high, all but the comparison. Duty is not to do better than another man, but to do it all and to the limit on one's own line, for the eye of God, not for the comparing eye of man. But we live now in a competitive day. In school and university and life the rewards are all for exceeding other men. Industry is organized on that principle. Our athletics rest on competition with others or with the record of others. It may be doubted whether the good old times were as good as our own times, but the spirit attributed to them ought to be the spirit of all times.

> "O good old man, how well in thee appears
> The constant service of the antique world,
> When service sweat for duty, not for meed!
> Thou art not for the fashion of these times,
> When none will sweat but for promotion."

This high view of duty is our deep need. There is a place for all true sentiment, for temperament and inclination, but the place of control is for duty. We need to acquire the habit of doing the next thing as duty.

Duty is ever with us and calling to us. It ought to be done by us simply because it is our duty until the thought of evading or shirking duty will never come to us and we do instinctively as though nothing else were possible that which is our duty. The habit of duty should become so fixed with us that we should see nothing but duty. There is a story of an archer who was teaching his art. The mark was a bird in a tree. "What do you see?" the archer asked the first man who came forward to shoot. "I see a bird in a tree," said he. "Stand aside," said the archer. "What do you see?" he said to the second man. "I see a bird," replied he. "Stand aside," the archer said. "And what do you see?" he asked the third. "I see the head of a bird," said he. "Shoot," the archer cried. We should be blind to all that diverts or obscures. The things that deaden the sense of duty must have no place with us. The "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God" will endure no indulgences which stifle her word in our hearts.

All duty can be done. What we ought to do is the only thing we can do, if we are what we ought to be. No right is impossible. "Let us have faith that right makes

might," said Lincoln in his speech in New York in 1859, "and in that faith let us dare to do our duty." It can be done, however impossible, just because it is our duty to do it. We must believe this if we have any ear for God at all, for, as Emerson wrote in lines inscribed on the wall of the schoolroom of the most efficient school for boys in America:

> So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers low, Thou must,
> The youth replies, I can!

"When I was a boy," said a man recently speaking to boys, "my father gave me a diary on Christmas at the close of a year in which I made changes in my life plans which were at the time a great shock and disappointment to him. He was a reticent man, so that when he did speak we heard. He said little about the matter, but in the diary he had written on the fly leaf, 'March on to duty.' If it led away from his desires, well and good, it was duty which was to be followed wheresoever it led." A new day will break in the Church and the world, in college and home, in public and private life

when men "march on to duty," unfrightened, unseduced, obedient, when they will say and live by their word, "It is my duty to be about my Father's business and to finish the work which he gave me to do." Those men will vanquish death and hell, and, after Christ, will build the walls of the kingdom which is righteousness and duty.

THE HABIT OF GOOD THINKING

"HE was an essentially pure-minded man," said Edward Caird of his brother John Caird, the head of the University of Glasgow and one of the greatest speakers and scholars of his day, "to whom no one could speak of anything doubtful or equivocal." He was a thinking man and he thought of good things, and his good thinking shaped his character and gave him a good defense against all that was unworthy and base. Such things stayed away from the man whose mind was always busy and always clean.

This habit of good thinking is one of the most necessary habits to acquire. We have to think. We can only choose what we will think about and how we will think, whether carefully and consecutively or in disorder and at random. What we think about is the first thing. "I don't know what to do," said a student in one of our colleges. "My father is one of the best of men and my grandfather was a noble man before him, and yet I have such bad thoughts in my mind. I am ashamed of them, and I want to get rid of

them." There is good hope that the boy who is ashamed of bad thoughts can get rid of them. If we despise them, and try to make it uncomfortable for them, they will soon go away of their own accord. And we can do this best, not by dwelling upon the wrong thoughts, but by refusing to dwell upon them, by turning the mind, instead, at once to good things. "Try thinking about Christ whenever a bad thought comes," one friend advised another as they sat and talked under the trees on a hill overlooking a river in North Carolina. "Let me hear how the plan works after you have tried it." In due time he had the simple answer: "I have tried it. It works."

Each one of us should have a stock of good thoughts—of places where we have been, of great games we have seen or played in, of rivers where we have fished or forests we have hunted in, of great men we have seen, of books we have read, of bits of poetry or pictures of real deeds of heroism, or of problems of life or politics. These we should have at hand, so as to be able to draw on them at any moment, and thus never be alone with only wasteful or harmful thoughts. And each time we have to make

a choice between the thoughts that help and those that harm, we need only say, "Now which thoughts are the right ones?" and think those alone.

But some say that it is hard to control thought. It is at first. That is why the law of habit must be used in the matter of thoughts. Character will show itself in the firm control of our thoughts, and on the other hand, the firm control of our thoughts will breed solid character. We can see this clearly in Mr. Gladstone. "Character," says Mr. John Morley in the "Life of Gladstone," "as has often been repeated, is completely fashioned will, and this superlative requirement, so indispensable for every man of action in whatever walk and on whatever scale, was eminently Mr. Gladstone's. From force of will, with all its roots in habit, example, conviction, purpose, sprang his leading and most effective qualities. He was never very ready to talk about himself, but when asked what he regarded as his master secret, he always said, 'Concentration.' Slackness of mind, vacuity of mind, the wheels of the mind revolving without biting the rails of the subject, were insupportable. Such habits were of the family of faint-

heartedness, which he abhorred. Steady practice of instant, fixed, effectual attention, was the key alike to his rapidity of apprehension and to his powerful memory. In the orator's temperament, exertion is often followed by a reaction that looks like indolence. This was never so with him. By instinct, by nature, by constitution, he was a man of action in all the highest senses of a phrase too narrowly applied and too narrowly construed. The currents of daimonic energy seemed never to stop, the vivid susceptibility to impressions never to grow dull. He was an idealist, yet always applying ideals to their purposes in act. Toil was his native element; and though he found himself possessed of many inborn gifts, he was never visited by the dream so fatal to many a well-laden argosy, that genius alone does all. There was nobody like him when it came to difficult business, for bending his whole strength to it, like a mighty archer stringing a stiff bow." We do not have the sort of mind Mr. Gladstone had, but we can apply his principles to such minds as we have.

And, indeed, it is not great and original thoughts which need to constitute the stuff on which we keep our minds at work. What

we need is to bring our common experiences and necessities under the conscious dominance of simple religious convictions. We shall find problems enough here to tax us and to give our minds all the occupation they are capable of. Even so great a man as John Caird found it so. "The difficulty you talk of is a most real one," he wrote. "I mean that of bringing principles to bear on the common trials and petty anxieties of daily life. Theoretical affliction and submission in a book, or in our solemn and sometimes formal words in prayer, are very different things from that homely, rugged, hard-featured thing that meets us in the face, when we come down from the clouds to the world of realities, the world of headaches and heartaches, of coarse, uncongenial contacts and intercourses. But this is our trial, and the trial which, since the age of persecution is passed away, is perhaps the most common and the most difficult to which a Christian is subjected. I know no hope for it but perseverance and prayer. It is the old thought of great principles and small duties and trials, and I need not descant upon it to you. But I am quite convinced that Christian advancement consists in nothing so much

as a habit, acquired by long effort and after many struggles and failures, of bringing high religious motive and feeling to bear on the common incidents of life. Don't you envy that state of mind where this has ceased to be a work of effort and conscious toil, when duty becomes a delight, God's presence constantly realized without endeavor, and so his service perfect freedom?" This is what comes to those who do bring all their thoughts under control of the obedience of Christ.

We can help ourselves to acquire the habit of good thinking by persisting in seeing always first the good in people and in things. And we can help ourselves to seeing the good by refusing to speak of the evil unless it is clearly necessary to do so. We do not need to fall into the moral slovenliness of the lines which declare that there is so much bad in the best of us, and so much good in the worst of us, that it scarcely behooves any of us to speak ill of the rest of us. There is ill which needs to be spoken of and spoken against. But for the most part it is the good which needs to be brought out, and we can easily find it and bring it out if we wish. Acquiring the habit of doing this

will react upon our thoughts, and we shall have our minds filled with what is pure and worthy and of good report.

No habit can give more pleasure at all times than the habit of good thinking. When we are with others it will be the source and ally of the habit of unselfish service, and when we are alone and have no opportunity to serve others, we can be glad and content alone because we have always satisfying resources with us. At night, when we lie awake, we are not unemployed. Old Dr. Samuel T. Spear said that he would go over in his mind, as he lay awake, whole books of the Bible. And those whose storehouse is less richly supplied than his, should still have enough there for all hours of solitude. The treasure of good thoughts is better than all other wealth.

We can begin to acquire the habit of good thinking at once if we do not have it already. The moment we lay down this book we can begin to recall the lessons we learned from it. We can review these in our minds, talk them over with the first people we meet, and begin at once to practice them in our own lives. We can be on the watch and not allow any vagrant thoughts to creep in

and lull the mind into indolence. When the evening comes we can read some good book and turn it over in our thought as we get ready for rest. In the morning when we awake, we can turn our minds at once to the last thought of the evening before, and then to the principles by which we are to live the new day. A few days of discipline like this will set our minds toward good ways, and by patient continuance in good thoughts, we shall soon have the habit of them and the peace and strength which come with a mind established in the love and practice of what is good alone.

THE HABIT OF WISE SPENDING

"I DON'T see why it is wrong to gamble at cards," said a student in one of our colleges. "On what ground is it wrong? I do not lose more than I can afford to lose and I like the excitement which I get for the money." "Well," said his friend, "I think I see several reasons why it is wrong, but it seems to me that it is enough to say that it is a silly way to spend money. You don't really get anything in return for it. And it is not only silly, it is wickedly wasteful. When there are in every one of our cities, agencies for the care of destitute children and for all kinds of benevolent and useful service, cramped and straitened for funds, when you remember how much good money can do, I think a man has no right to waste his money in gambling." We have no more right to spend wrongly than we have to acquire wrongly.

This question of the wise spending of our money is fundamental. It is a question of the spending of our life, or of some one's life. For money is life. As Dr. Schauffler said once in an address:

"Money is myself. I am a laboring man, we will say, and can handle a pickax, and I hire myself out for a week at two dollars a day. At the close of the week I get twelve dollars and I put it in my pocket. What is that twelve dollars? It is a week's worth of my muscle put into greenbacks and pocketed; that is, I have a week's worth of myself in my pocket.

"Now, the moment you understand this, you begin to understand that money in your pocket is not merely silver and gold, but is something human, something that is instinct with power, because it represents power expended. (If you are not earning any money of your own, and your father is supporting you, then you are carrying that much of your father around in your pocket.) Now money is like electricity; it is stored power, and it is only a question as to where that power is to be loosed.

"Do you see what a blessed, what a solemn thing this giving is, this giving of my stored self to my Master? Surely we need, in the matter of giving, consecrated thought as to where to loose ourselves, earnest prayer in the guidance of the choice of where to loose our stored power, and earnest prayer to God

to add his blessing to the loosed personality in this money that I have sent abroad, that there may come a tenfold increase because of my personal power that I have sent." What is true of giving is true of all spending. We have no right to be reckless of human life, and yet we are reckless of life when we spend money recklessly.

The question of saving is simply the question of spending. Industry and frugality are the simple rules of prosperity. "In order to secure my credit and character as a tradesman," says Benjamin Franklin in his shrewd autobiography, "I took care not only to be in reality industrious and frugal, but to avoid the appearances to the contrary." On these two principles he constantly lays emphasis. Of his printing business in Philadelphia he writes:

"My circumstances, however, grew daily easier. My original habits of frugality continuing, and my father having, among his instructions to me when a boy, frequently repeated a proverb of Solomon, 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men,' I thence considered industry as a means of obtaining wealth and distinc-

tion, which encouraged me, though I did not think that I should ever literally stand before kings, which, however, has since happened; for I have stood before five, and even had the honor of sitting down with one, the King of Denmark, to dinner."

The fifth and sixth among the virtues he set out to acquire were:

"Frugality—Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; that is, waste nothing.

"Industry—Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions."

He tells us of his "Poor Richard's Almanac":

"I filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar, with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality, as the means of procuring wealth, and thereby securing virtue; it being more difficult for a man in want to act always honestly, as, to use here one of those proverbs, 'It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright.'"

To be rich is no high ambition, but each of us not only may, but ought to strive to be independent and to provide for others de-

pendent upon us. And the way to do this which is open to us is not the earning of large sums of money, but the saving of small sums. If we stop the leaks, the supply will grow. What we thus save is not our treasure. That is to be laid up "where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." If what we save becomes our treasure we are doing wrong. But we are not doing our duty if we carelessly let all that comes to us slip loosely away and do nothing to prepare for our future needs and those of others. Nothing in Old Testament or New excuses any of us from the duties of industry and frugality.

The virtue of simplicity in spending is rarer now than it was in an earlier day. Then the very conditions of life in our country forced upon the people, except a few, a much sterner economy and more frugal management than is usual now. Families then practiced both, cultivated an energy and a simplicity which constituted in many a home the finest school of character to be found, and extracted from hard conditions a comfortable subsistence to the old, and a hard-bought education to the young. In Mrs. Cheney's

life of her father, Horace Bushnell, there is a beautiful picture of such a home, and Horace Bushnell himself has described, in a noble speech on "The Age of Homespun," the frugality of the home:

"It was also a great point, in this homespun mode of life, that it imparted exactly what many speak of only with contempt, a closely girded habit of economy. Harnessed, all together, into the producing process, young and old, male and female, from the boy that rode the plow horse to the grandmother knitting under her spectacles, they had no conception of squandering lightly what they all had been at work, thread by thread, and grain by grain, to produce. They knew too exactly what everything cost, even small things, not to husband them carefully. Men of patrimony in the great world, therefore, noticing their small way in trade or expenditure, are ready, as we often see, to charge them with meanness, simply because they knew things only in the small; or, what is not far different, because they were too simple and rustic to have any conception of the big operations by which other men are wont to get their money without earning it, and lavish the more freely because it was

not earned. Still, this knowing life only in the small, it will be found, is really anything but meanness."

Many of the strongest and best men of our country came from such homes and regret that their children will not have the strong discipline of their fathers.

Occasionally a strong man who did not grow up in such a homespun home has nevertheless a character of exactness and simplicity and the will and wisdom to strive to pass it on to his children. In Mr. Morley's "Life of Gladstone," a letter of Mr. Gladstone's to his son is printed, revealing the man who wrote, and counseling with sound sense, the younger man who was in college at Oxford at the time:

"1. To keep a short journal of principal employments in each day; most valuable as an account book of the all-precious gift of Time.

"2. To keep also an account book of receipt and expenditure; and the least troublesome way of keeping it is to keep it with care. This done in early life, and carefully done, creates the habit of performing the great duty of keeping our expenditure (and therefore our desires) within our means.

"3. Read attentively (and it is pleasant reading) Taylor's Essay on Money, which, if I have not done it already, I will give you. It is most healthy and most useful reading.

"4. Establish a minimum number of hours in the day for study, say seven at present, and do not, without reasonable cause, let it be less; noting down against yourself the days of exception. There should also be a minimum number for the vacations, which at Oxford are extremely long.

"5. There arises an important question about Sundays. Though we should to the best of our power avoid secular work on Sundays, it does not follow that the mind should remain idle. There is an immense field of knowledge connected with religion, and much of it is of a kind that will be of use in the schools and in relation to your general studies. In these days of shallow skepticism, so widely spread, it is more than ever to be desired that we should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in us.

"6. As to duties directly religious, such as daily prayer in the morning and evening, and daily reading of some portion of the Holy Scripture, or as to the holy ordinances

of the gospel, there is little need, I am confident, to advise you; one thing, however, I would say, that it is not difficult, and it is most beneficial, to cultivate the habit of inwardly turning the thoughts to God, though but for a moment in the course, or during the intervals of our business; which continually presents occasions requiring his aid and guidance.

"Turning again to ordinary duty, I know no precept more wide or more valuable than this: cultivate self-help; do not seek nor like to be dependent upon others for what you can yourself supply; and keep down as much as you can the standard of your wants, for in this lies a great secret of manliness, true wealth, and happiness; as, on the other hand, the multiplication of our wants makes us effeminate and slavish, as well as selfish.

"In regard to money as well as to time, there is a great advantage in its methodical use. Especially is it wise to dedicate a certain portion of our means to purposes of charity and religion, and this is more easily begun in youth than in after life. The greatest advantage of making a little fund of this kind is that when we are asked to give, the competition is not between self on the one

hand and charity on the other, but between the different purposes of religion and charity with one another, among which we ought to make the most careful choice. It is desirable that the fund thus devoted should not be less than one tenth of our means; and it tends to bring a blessing on the rest."

Such care and frugality, as Bushnell said, are not meanness. They are simple honesty. Some people think that all spending is good because it promotes business, and that even extravagance has its excuse in providing labor for those who minister to it. But there is bad and wasteful spending as well as good and helpful spending. Money that is at work employing men at useful production is doing more than money that is lavished on frills and whims whose manufacture can only be capricious.

Some people want whatever they see. Children are constantly longing for whatever they have not, but see pictures of, or find that other children have. And many grown-up people are like children in this. If they have money they spend it without looking forward and asking whether there is not some better use to make of it or some greater need to be met. But having money

is no reason for throwing it away. It is ours to be used sacredly as a trust. And worse than all this waste of what we have, is the folly of some who spend what they have not, incurring obligations which they cannot discharge. The honest man cannot understand how the dishonest or reckless man can do this, or how doing it, he can hold up his head among his fellows. The duty of wise spending requires us to live within what money we have, and not to spend what we do not have.

We shall only use money wisely when we can do so habitually, when the right use of each dollar and of each cent of each dollar is a law of our nature.

THE HABIT OF HOPEFULNESS

TO be a dreamer and a visionary is to lay one's self open, in this practical day, to some scorn and reproach. "Oh, come now, be practical," is the way we are met if we wander away from things as they are, or seem to expect more from men than ordinary give-and-take conduct. The reformer in politics is laughed at and told that men are what they are and that they must be dealt with as we find them; that they are not open to high patriotic considerations, but must be moved by motives potent on their level; that the dream of a purified state in which men shall act disinterestedly for the good of the nation is a mere impractical dream. The purist in business seems to masses of men to be the same sort of visionary. "You cannot be a Christian in business," some man says, "and succeed. If you want to succeed you must act, not on the Golden Rule of the gospel, but on David Harum's version of it, 'Do to the other fellow what he intends to do to you and do it first.'" Altruism, consideration for others who do not take care of themselves and hold their

own, has no place in the business world, these men argue. The man who believes in an order of love, of thinking first of his brother's interests and only afterwards of his own, such a man may be good material for citizenship in heaven, but he is not adapted to membership in the industrial society of this age. And the world smiles in the same way at the idealist in the Church, the man who believes in the unity of the Church and who longs to see that unity realized visibly, who wants to see Christ's followers follow Christ, who does not see why the command of Christ which he said was fundamental, the command to love one's brother better than one's self, cannot be fulfilled, inside the Church, at least. All these are victims, the world thinks, victims of a groundless hope. The world looks at them as Joseph's brothers looked at him. "Go to," it says, "let us hear what this dreamer says." Only it has not as much time as Joseph's brothers had and it soon loses patience and leaves the dreamers to compare their dreams, while it goes on its practical way.

Nevertheless the dreamers have caught the true Christian secret of hope. On the day of Pentecost, Peter pointed out that what had

happened that day carried its own evidence with it, for it had been foretold by the prophets that when the Spirit of God should come, the old men should dream dreams and the young men should see visions. The people of the true light would be visionaries and dreamers. The old Hebrew ideal had been the ideal of the seer, the man who could look on to the greater things. The supreme habit which the nation acquired during the centuries of its education was the habit of hope, of expectation of the Messiah and of golden age. When the Messiah came, the Jews failed to recognize him and soon lost this hope which passed on to the Christians. The Christians now became the people of the dream, the men and women who saw the higher and the better things and believed they could exist here and now. Christianity proved itself to be of God by the brave way in which it closed its eyes to what prevented the coming of the best things in individual hearts and in the world by its blindness to the despair of the world and by its confident assertion that there was an order of God, that men could and must find it and that the kingdom of God must be on the earth. It would not be discouraged or defeated. God

lives, it said, and the world is his and he must have it and rule it, and even that which troubles men and seems to them unintelligible has some meaning which will some day appear. Through it good is to be wrought out and hope fulfilled.

Without hope scarcely anything that we possess that is really worth while would have come to us. All that is in fact, was first in some one's hope before it ever came to be in fact. The world itself existed in the hope of God before it came really to be. "By faith," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear." In science the habit of hopefulness is absolutely indispensable. The man of science with a great problem, if he assumed that the problem could not be solved and refused to try any apparently hopeful solution of it, would never make any progress. All progress is made in science through the use of the "working hypothesis," and the "working hypothesis" is only the hope of a solution to be found along a certain line. If that hope is disappointed the real investigator tries another and

another and another. He will never give up hope. It is the necessary habit of his mind. It is so also in art and architecture and poetry. What is wrought out by the artist, the architect, the poet, is what he first hoped and dreamed, what he saw in the far-off reachings of his mind. In exploration it is hope alone that sustains men, the hope of the new land to be discovered, a new mountain or lake to be found or a river source at last to be traced up. Without an irrepressible hope in the soul there could have been no Livingstone, no Whitman, no Columbus.

How in God's name did Columbus get over
  Is a pure wonder to me, I protest,
Cabot, and Raleigh too, that well-read rover,
  Frobisher, Dampier, Drake, and the rest.
      Bad enough all the same,
      For them that after came,
      But, in great heaven's name,
      How he should ever think
      That on the other brink
Of this wild waste, terra firma should be,
Is a pure wonder, I must say, to me.

How a man ever should hope to get thither,
  E'en if he knew that there was another side;
But to suppose he should come any whither,
  Sailing straight on into chaos untried,
      In spite of the motion
      Across the whole ocean,

To stick to the notion
That in some nook or bend
Of a sea without end
He should find North and South America,
Was a pure madness, indeed I must say, to me.

What if wise men had, as far back as Ptolemy,
Judged that the earth like an orange was round,
None of them ever said, "Come along, follow me,
Sail to the west, and the east will be found."
Many a day before
Ever they'd come ashore,
From the "San Salvador,"
Sadder and wiser men
They'd have turned back again;
And that he did not, but did cross the sea,
Is a pure wonder, I must say, to me.

Even when things seem to happen, they happen to the seekers, the seers, the men of hope.

All social, intellectual and moral progress results from the hope of better things than the things that are. A vision is a rent in the sky, a breach in the wall, a gateway through which the larger things pour in. The dreamer is he whom Von Sturmer describes in his lines in Richard Jeffries' "Story of My Heart":

Dim woodlands made him wiser far
Than those who thresh their barren thought
With flails of knowledge dearly bought,
Till all his soul shone like a star

That flames at fringe of heaven's bar,
Where breaks the surge of space unseen
Against Hope's veil that hangs between
Love's future and the woes that are.

There are men who realize that nothing that is can be accepted as the final thing until at last the perfect is come, the longed-for and hoped-for best thing of God.

The strength of life is to be found in the depth and height of our hopes. Garibaldi and Mazzini dreamed of an Italy united and free and were strong to lead and achieve because the hope they cherished held them so firmly. And Horace Bushnell was so great a preacher because the habit of a mighty hope in the gospel enthralled his soul. He saw great things in God, and what he saw in God he strove to bring out in speech for men. All great preachers must be men of hope. The world cannot be won to despair. It is true that great multitudes of men hold to hopeless religions like Buddhism, but they cannot hold to them contentedly. The outreaching of the soul for larger and better things cannot easily be suppressed. Men are waiting for a hopeful word, and the religion and the preachers who can speak it to them control the future. All great leaders of men

must have somewhere to lead men. Their goal must be a hope, and the courage and patience of all struggle will depend on the faith and strength of our forward dream. A man without resources of his own takes up a tunnel scheme which has failed and by the indomitable perseverance of his hope enlists other men and means, and the enterprise which connects two great states by a tunnel under a great river is at once called after his name by the public which benefits by the victory of his hopefulness. The assurance that he would find that which he sought carried Livingstone through hardship enough to destroy any ordinary man of hopeless heart. Paul dreamed of a universal Church, and his hope accomplished itself over every obstacle of race and language. The hope that the Campbells would come, and a half-demented girl's conviction that they were coming and that she heard their pipers, upheld the men at Lucknow, whom nothing but hope could save, until Havelock came. Our own teachers would have given us up long ago if it were not for their hope that in spite of ourselves we could become something.

The best things of our lives are not our possessions, but our hopes. We can be bet-

ter men and women than we are. The divinest realities are the purposes of God for us which are not yet fulfilled, which are among our distant hopes. And in these hopes the comfort of life is to be found, the things which we have not attained as yet and cannot understand, but to which we hope to come. Our hymns and poems tell us this:

Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea;
And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to thee.

So Faber puts it and so does Newman:

So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since and lost awhile.

And so F. W. H. Myers, in "St. Paul":

What can we do o'er whom the unbeholden
Hangs in a night with which we cannot cope?
What but look sunward and with faces golden
Speak to each other softly of a hope.

No habit, after the habit of truth, is more necessary to man than the habit of hope. Whether or not we can acquire that habit will determine for us whether we shall be strong and glad, and leaders of men to better things.

THE HABIT OF DOING THINGS NOW

IN his book entitled "The Happy Life," ex-President Eliot of Harvard quotes the question of Emerson, asking what use immortality would be to a man who does not know how to live half an hour. Immortality, in the popular view, is just an endless number of half hours tied together, one after the other. What would a man do with a million of them who did not know what to do with one? And of what use to anyone will be a great, long-dreamed-of opportunity for heroism or service, unless preparation has been made for it by such heroism and service in the things that went before? All these questions only bring out clearly the true principle of life; namely, that living now is the only living, that we ought to use rightly each moment and fill it full of true work and duty-doing.

This is the only sensible and workable principle. Any other is impossible. You cannot speak two words at the same time and you cannot do two acts, each requiring the whole personality, at once. There is no way

in which we can pull back into the present an hour that is past, to do its work over again, and there is no way in which we can draw down into the present an hour out of the future, in order to live it now. Living now is the only living. Thinking of past life or of life to come is not living. The chance to live goes by while we are thinking about it. We cannot break off an immense achievement and do it at any one given time. We can only live one moment at a time and do at one time the work that can be put in one moment. Life ceases to be such a complicated and impracticable thing when we realize this and are willing to live moment by moment.

It is vitally important that we should realize that the law of life is living now. The kind of life we are living is producing the sort we shall live forever. We may well believe that death brings a mighty change, but it is a change of sphere and of condition, not of character. We shall be what we are. The kind of things we do now and the way we do them now will not suddenly undergo a change. We shall keep right on. The boy or girl who is now negligent and shiftless and untruthful is likely to go on living

so in the future. If any boy or girl is prompt, alert, faithful now, the habit of using life for living, of doing things in the only time we ever have to do them in, namely, now, will get so established that the boy or girl will go right on, really living always.

And this plan is the restful one. It saves us from the dread, the paralyzing intimidation and surrender of the soul on account of life's bigness. We realize that we do not have to live our years all at once, that all that we have to do is the one thing that we can do, merely live our lives a bit at a time. And so we save ourselves also from the miseries of memory and the terrors of our imagination of the future by the simple plea of being absorbed in present duty. Nine tenths of the wretchedness of our lives does not spring from the present. It springs from brooding over the past and the things in the past which are beyond recall, or it comes from apprehensions of the future, most of which never arrive. In other words, we lose our lives in thinking of how we did live or failed to live in the past, or how we will live in the future. But this is missing the chance to live, and so we die under the thoughts of life. This is why life grows so uneasy and

fretful. Let us stop all this and spend each moment in really living.

By doing this we acquire power for future living. Lamentation about the quality of our past living or great purposes about future living will only weaken us unless they are expressed in a better and firmer quality of present living. And if we get into the habit of living strongly now we shall live that way hereafter without thinking about it. If we do the things that ought to be done now, we shall do them then. The great authorities in any department are the men who grew into authority gradually. They did what each moment brought to them, and so, after a while, no moment brought to them anything which they could not do. The world soon found that out, and straightway began to bring everything in their line to them. "We become authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres," writes one who was himself an authority, an expert, "by so many separate acts and hours of work. Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keeps faithfully busy each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with per-

fect certainty count on waking up some fine morning to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation in whatever pursuit he may have singled out. Silently, among the details of his business, the power of judging in all that class of matter will have built itself up within him as a possession that will never pass away."

In this way also life achieves results. National greatness is a product of slow education, not of great efforts. Germany and the United States and Japan have forged ahead of other nations as they have, not because of national energy or of any sudden effort, but as the result of a careful and thorough public-school system which has trained the people. No emergency effort on the part of other nations can offset this advantage. They will have to begin now where we began years ago and do some living in the present, instead of spending time dreaming of the past or the future. And with individuals as with nations, results are sums in arithmetic. The big, personal tasks, whether in character or in work, are not done wholesale, but are built up piece by piece, just as the little coral insects build the reefs or the ants their huge mounds. "Do

things now," is the way to get many and great things done.

But while this principle is the key to the achievement of great results, it is not the greatness of the results which is of significance, but the spirit and purpose and the process which produced them. A political writer has recently compared Gladstone, Bismarck and Cavour to the disadvantage of Gladstone on the ground that he erected no new state as each of the others did. But the results of a man's work are dependent upon the circumstances and materials in the midst of which his life fell. Not what it added up to, but how he lived it, how faithfully, persistently, unselfishly, is the great question regarding each life. What was the quality and intentness of his living?

In practicing this principle of "Do it now," which was Dr. Babcock's motto, the rule of "Living now the only living," there are two things that will help. One is, of two duties always do the harder one first. Do not substitute an easier thing for a hard one. And the other is, check all unreal daydreams. Don't live in the past. Don't live in the future. Thinking backward and forward is necessary, but now is the living time, and

we have memory and imagination that by them we may learn the lessons of the past and draw upon the inspiration of the future for the needs of present living.

This was the method of Jesus. His life seems at times almost to have had no plan. He stopped to spend hours with any inquiring heart. He was impatient at no interruption. He seized each moment's opportunity for living purposes. He put out his life incessantly. He actually lived. And God unrolled the wonderful drama of his life. He did, moment by moment, his Father's will. "While it is day," was his motto. Therefore he was at rest. "The Father . . . hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him." This should be our law and our life.

Are you in earnest?
  Seize this very minute.
What you can do
  Or think you can, begin it.

THE HABIT OF HIGH-MINDEDNESS

EACH mind has an altitude of its own. Some move on low levels. The thoughts which come to them are low thoughts, sometimes evil, sometimes vain, sometimes merely trifling. Such minds seek what they like. Serious conversation and books are unattractive to them. They go where they can find what is not to their dislike, where stories are told and language spoken which involve no tax upon thought and which feed the tastes of a low-leveled life. As between the library and the grill room, the solid book and the empty story, the talk of men about real questions and life and the chaff and gossip of the scandal-spreader and fool-jester, they choose the lower down. There are many other levels below and above this. The highest is the level of the men who try to bring all their thoughts and tastes into conformity with the best, who by always choosing the upper and better have sought to acquire the habit of a high mind, to which evil thoughts do not naturally come and by which they are rejected when they do come. Such men hope

some day to come to the height of character set forth in Daniel's "Epistle to the Countess of Cumberland":

He that of such a height has built his mind,
And reared the dwelling of his thoughts so strong,
As neither fear nor hope can shake the frame
Of his resolved powers; nor all the wind
Of vanity or malice pierce to wrong
His settled peace, or to disturb the same:
What a fair seat hath he, from whence he may
The boundless wastes and wealds of man survey!

And with how free an eye doth he look down
Upon these lower regions of turmoil!
Where all the streams of passion mainly beat
On flesh and blood; where honor, power, renown,
Are only gay afflictions, golden toil;
Where greatness stands upon as feeble feet,
As frailty doth; and only great doth seem
To little minds, who do it so esteem.

How may we hope to attain to such high-mindedness that our thoughts will be always elevated and worthy, firm and consecutive, that our minds may be busy in good things and ready always for hard tasks?

Substantial reading will help us toward high-mindedness. It will give us a body of good thoughts. The mind will inevitably be employed upon something. If it is not employed upon what is good and high, it

will resort to what is evil and low. The radical weakness of human nature appears in the tendency of our minds and hearts to drop. There is a law of moral gravity as well as a law of physical gravity. Unless the mind is borne up, given good nourishment from without, it will drop into empty imaginings, or evil will slip in to fill the place which belongs to good. Occasionally "a full man," such as Lord Bacon had in mind, may be made by meditation, but as a rule he is made only, as Bacon said, by reading. To be high-minded we shall have to read substantial books. It is all right to read books of different kinds. The mind needs them. Dr. Thomas Arnold was very positive about this. "Keep your view of men and things attentive," he urged, "and depend upon it that a mixed knowledge is not a superficial one. As far as it goes the views that it gives are true, but he who reads deeply in one class of writers only, gets views which are almost sure to be perverted, and which are not only narrow but false. Adjust your proposed amount of reading to your time and inclination—this is perfectly free to every man; but whether that amount be large or small, let it be varied in its kind

and widely varied. If I have a confident opinion on any one point connected with the improvement of the human mind it is on this." When people read at all nowadays, however, this is not usually the warning they need. Their difficulty is their diffuse reading. What we need is more concentration on a few great books which we shall master and store in the mind. This will elevate its level.

A wise use of conversation uplifts the mind. Perhaps sometimes we feel that we have nothing to give. Often the atmosphere of a conversation seems to congeal our minds. We feel a self-consciousness and unnaturalness which strikes us dumb. At such times we can at least draw out others. To appreciate their point of view, to draw out what cargo their minds carry, will quicken and exalt our own minds. Even where other people have no reasoned opinion to share with us they have had their histories, their experiences of life. They came from a definite childhood environment. All that we can draw out of them will enrich them in the giving and will help to ennoble the tone of our own minds if we view it with sympathy.

Each day has its opportunities for the enrichment of memory. "I know over a hundred poems and Psalms now," said an old man of humble circumstances but of a high mind. "I memorize them on the cars and whenever I can, and they make me very rich." A low mind cannot long remain low when filled with the great words which cannot be kept down, which soar aloft toward God. Each of these words displaces some other. The mind has elastic capacities, but its working sections are limited and they can be preëmpted or reclaimed by what is great and good.

The high-minded man will use rightly and yet with strong control the floods of newspaper and magazine literature of the day. Chinese Gordon at one time stopped his newspapers altogether, and many people would be better off without them. They fill the mind with low and trivial interests and they degrade its tone. The highest type of mind cannot be produced from a diet of periodical literature. It can use the papers that pass in the night, but its light will be thrown on them, not drawn from them.

Loving true judgments and sound knowledge for their own sake and not for the sake

of the commercial uses to which they can be put, exalts the mind. The mind that dwells with the truth and that ever travels with it will always have truth to give, but the gift will be the richer because free and not calculated, because it flows from a fountain stored up for its own sake. The love of truth gives the mind its fullest elevation and freedom.

The mind is helped to a higher level by an attitude of appreciation and good will. If we are ever looking for what we dislike and disapprove we shall soon feel the down-pull of such an attitude upon the tone of the mind. That which we despise the mind should reject, but its lookout should always be for the things to which it can assent. In every conversation it will give most and gain most by picking out what it can approve. If we watch ourselves we shall soon discover how practical and searching this principle is. The mind soon takes a hint, and when it learns that it is to see what is fair and to be blind to all else, it will respond to the appeal of higher things which this law addresses to it and will uplift itself.

We must check also in the interest of the highest-mindedness all useless and evil

vagaries of the imagination. The imagination is a great wanderer. It loves to stray everywhere. There is no nook or cranny of the universe where it does not go, and many of its journeys are wasteful or worse. It goes down into low places and drags the mind with it. The high mind must lay a law upon the imagination and keep it on the heights.

The highest things in the world are principles. Whoever associates with principles is in the loftiest company. The mind which wants to be higher should be directed toward principles. Each new principle which it finds and fixes is a new anchorage to the highest. When we have defined to ourselves duty and truth and purity and unselfishness, we have bound our minds to the noblest we can know. They will be high minds as long as they do not forget.

And no principles will more elevate the mind than the principle of prayer and the principle of Christ. Prayer checks all downward movement of the mind and spreads out over its every part the upward pulling of the Spirit of God. And Christ is the great principle of exaltation. He is more than that; he is the Person who lifts. "I, if I be lifted

up from the earth," he said, "will draw all men unto myself." And to be a Christian is to have the lower levels shut to us while the mind seeks the things that are above, where Christ is. He has now been lifted up and the mind of the Christian must be with him, on the high levels of God.

THE HABIT OF HIGH-MINDED LOWLINESS

HIGH-MINDEDNESS never shows itself more unmistakably than in the humility of true unselfishness. The noblest illustration of this is found in the incident of the Saviour's washing the disciples' feet on the evening of the night of his betrayal. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands," says John, "and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." As a simple statement of fact this is beautiful and wonderful, but it is more than a statement of fact. It is a spiritual interpretation. Jesus rose and stooped. That is the fact. But he rose and stooped "knowing that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God." That is the deep spiritual interpretation.

We see here first of all the relation of belief to conduct, of thought to action. His

deed sprang from his mindedness. His deed was lowly because his mindedness was high. What we hold theoretically is bound to determine what we do practically. It is so in the sciences and arts. The results flow from theory, and the theory determines the results. At a Yale alumni dinner some years ago, Mr. Julian Kennedy, a famous oarsman in his day and now one of the leading blast-furnace engineers, took issue with the modern demand for practical technical training as against the old-fashioned theoretical type. He defended the Sheffield Scientific School for preserving old-time traditions instead of making its courses manual, workshop courses. "It is the man who knows the theory who does the thing," said he. "It is the true theory that counts. The man who designed the guns used on the American ships in the Spanish War never had any experience with a hammer and bench, and he did not see the guns cast. It was all purely theoretical. But when the guns went off the results were not theoretical." And so in all great modern buildings. The engineers sit in their offices and figure and draw on paper. In mills which they do not visit, the girders are made. On ground which

they have never seen the material is assembled and the bridge or the sky-scraper is reared, each piece fitting each other piece, and the whole great structure falling practically together from mere theoretical drawings. The result flows from the mindedness of the engineer. And what is true in these arts is true also in the art of life. There as truly as in the physical sciences results depend upon our theories, what we do upon what we think. Professor James begins his lectures on "Pragmatism" with a quotation from Mr. Chesterton's "Heretics," in which he sets forth his conviction: "There are some people," says Mr. Chesterton, "and I am one of them, who think that the most practical and important thing about a man is still his view of the universe. We think that for a landlady considering a lodger it is important to know his income but still more important to know his philosophy. . . . We think the question is not whether the theory of the cosmos affects matters, but whether in the long run anything else affects them." And Professor James adds: "I think with Mr. Chesterton in this matter. I know that you ladies and gentlemen have a philosophy, each and all of you, and that

the most interesting and important thing about you is the way in which it determines the perspective in your several worlds."

What kind of mind we have will determine what kind of deeds we do, and it is primarily upon these questions on which Jesus had a certain mind that all depends. He knew his origin and his destiny. In a note in one of his books, Ruskin says there are three great questions which confront every soul: "Where did I come from? What can I know? Where am I going?" What we do depends on what our mind is with regard to these. We shall serve men in the spirit of God if we have a mind high enough to realize its heavenly origin and heavenly destiny.

We see also in this incident in Jesus' life power conscious of itself but used in service. That is the end of power. The supreme virtue of machinery is docility. The history of civilization is only the story of the taming of force, the bending of the power of nature to obedience. Just so Jesus regarded living power. It was a thing to be used. "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life," he said. "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." It was this possession of limitless

power all subjugated to unselfishness which made Jesus so calm and steadfast. He had the habit of lofty-minded self-forgetfulness.

Such self-forgetfulness and unselfishness are a sign of confidence in one's own position, an evidence of easy noble-mindedness. It is the noble who dare be lowly. Jesus with his full knowledge of his origin and destiny in God would stoop to any lowliness. He was high-minded enough to dare. It is told by one of the childhood friends of the late Walter Lowrie, who was drowned at Newport in 1901, just at the threshold of his career, that "one summer several young people, some guests of the family, and the Lowrie boys were waiting outside the Tyrone station for a train. A wretched-looking woman with a little baby in her arms, carrying a traveling bag, came past, with another little child hardly able to walk clinging to her skirts and following as best it could. One of the boys, half in earnest, probably, yet thinking it was like Walter, said, 'There's your chance,' and without hesitation Walter spoke to the woman, picked up the child and carried it over to the branch train and onto a car. It was always rather crowded round the station in the afternoon, and Walter came

back looking a little foolish, not because he minded being seen by so many, but rather, I think, because we could not help showing that we thought it fine of him, and he had a horror of showing off." He was sure enough of his social position to dare to stoop. A high mind bred a lowly love.

And is there not a self-revelation in haughtiness and pride? Where there is no lowly love we know there is no true high-mindedness. The people who are priggish and snobbish, who act discourteously, betray an origin and a destiny very different from the Saviour's, who rose and stooped.

And deeds not only reveal our minds, haughty deeds low minds and lowly deeds lofty minds, but deeds also help to make minds. Humble and loving acts will help to make us high-minded.

> Wouldst thou the holy hill ascend
> And see the Father's face,
> To all his children humbly bend
> And seek the lowest place.
> Thus humbly doing on the earth
> What things the lofty scorn
> Thou shalt assert the noble birth
> Of all the lowly born.

On the other hand, unlowly conduct is a source of deterioration of mind and charac-

ter. That was why the best sentiment of the South disapproved of slavery. It might or might not be bad for the slave. It was unmistakably bad for the slaveholder. No man was fit to own another man. The sense of ownership of a man could not be good for the man who owned him. And so hazing, often good for the hazed, is invariably bad for the hazer. All use of power that is not humble and unselfish is bad for high-mindedness. The possession of it is presumption not for its willful exercise, but for its restraint. We have it only as a trust.

> Naught that I have my own I call,
> I hold it for the Giver.
> My heart, my life, my strength, my all,
> Are his and his forever.

He who feels this and acts upon it is the truly high-minded man.

THE HABIT OF NOT DAWDLING

THE habit of not dawdling is one of the most needed and most useful Christian habits. A dawdler can't really make a good Christian. If he does, he invariably ceases to be a dawdler.

Plenty of boys and girls who are now dawdlers have in them the making of good Christians, and one of the first signs of their real purpose to be Christians will be the laying aside of all dawdling. Some boys take twice as long to run an errand as it ought to take and waste a great deal of time making up their minds to run it. Some girls are so slow in dressing that their mothers have to do a great many things which their daughters could have done for them if they had only been prompt and quick. A great deal of time and patience is wasted by dawdlers.

And as a rule the dawdlers are the very people who complain most when other people dawdle and inconvenience them. If the postman loiters along the way and delivers the mail late, if the train is slow and does not arrive on time, if the coachman who was

to meet the train lounges about his work and is not there, no one is more impatient than the very people who always dawdle themselves and who are now vexed at nothing but the very principle on which they themselves act, the principle of dallying with one's work instead of doing it.

There is a good word for all dawdlers in the Second Book of Samuel. It was after the long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. At last Abner revolted from the house of Saul and sent word to the elders of Israel, saying, "In times past ye sought for David to be king over you: now then do it." That was the manly way to talk. "Now then do it." Duties are not to be talked about, they are to be done. In our work and our warfare with evil and in our home duties and our achievement of character, the word for us is Abner's word, "Do it."

It is foolish to dawdle because of fear that we cannot do. The only way that we can find out whether we can or not is to try at once and to try hard. And all that we ought we can. There is no such thing as impossibility in the line of our divinely assigned work. General Armstrong used to

scorn the idea of impossibility. At an Indian Rights conference at Lake Mohonk he once leaped up, when some one had pronounced a certain righteous course of action as impossible, with the words: "Impossible! What are Christians in the world for but to achieve the impossible by the help of God?" As he went about in behalf of Hampton Institute he was constantly compelled to do what could not be done. "Once," he said, "there was a woodchuck and a dog got after him. Now woodchucks can't climb trees, but this one had to, so up he went." And another time, when he simply had to get money for the school, he told of an old negro who was seen digging in a tree for a 'possum. Some one told him there was no 'possum there. "Ain't no 'possum in dat hole?" said the old man. "Dey's just got to be, 'cause dey's nuffin' in de house for supper."

Men always can. "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me," declared Paul. There were, of course, things which he did not do. There are things which we cannot do. But the only way to find out is to try, and if we try we shall find that we can do everything that we ought to do. There is

no excuse for dawdling because we can't perform.

The best cure is to begin at once. In the matter of character-building, where dawdling is most deadly and most easy, we can begin now by cutting off some indulgence, or by taking on some new practice, such as prayer at a fixed hour or a new attitude in prayer which will break up dawdling habits. Or we can deal with our speech, and by making it clear and right and instant, help to confirm the habit of straightforwardness.

But the difficulty with most dawdlers is not the difficulty of beginning, but the difficulty of keeping at it. They are like the son in the parable who said promptly, "I go, sir," and went not. They are ready to make a start, but they soon stop to rest or to think of something else or to look out of the window or to wish that the task were done. They are like the Bandar-log, the Monkey People who are always dreaming and wishing that things could be done just by wishing that they were done, who never stick at anything long enough to complete it, but always are carried off by some new scheme.

There is a character in the "Jungle Book" who was no dawdler. That was Rikki-tikki-

tavi. When he saw something to be done he did it, and when he took hold he did not let go. Woe to Rikki-tikki if in his fight with Nag he had released his hold on the big cobra's head, and woe to the family in the bungalow if he had dawdled in taking hold.

In our struggle for character we must not be frightened into letting go. We shall certainly be lifted up higher before we get through than we had ever dared to hope to go, but we are not to fear. The Saviour of whom we have taken hold has taken hold of us with his divine grasp and he means to raise us far above all that is low in life and at last to lift us sheer into his home above. We ought not to be fearful.

Jesus when he was here was looking for men who would not dawdle. His own life was full of eager, unhesitating action, and he called men to come to him in the same spirit, and straightway they rose up and left all and followed him. That was the kind of disciple he desired. And he taught these men how to act as the workmen of God, prompt, eager, ready for opportunity, quick to do every duty.

In life and work we are not to be as those

who are asleep, who begin, perhaps wakefully, but soon dawdle off again. We are to watch and work as the children of the day. Our Captain's appeal to us is the old hymn:

Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve,
  And press with vigor on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal,
  And an immortal crown.

A cloud of witnesses around
  Hold thee in full survey:
Forget the steps already trod,
  And onward urge thy way.

'Tis God's all-animating voice
  That calls thee from on high;
'Tis his own hand presents the prize
  To thine aspiring eye:

That prize with peerless glories bright,
  Which shall new luster boast,
When victors' wreaths and monarchs' gems
  Shall blend in common dust.

Blest Saviour, introduced by thee,
  Have I my race begun;
And, crowned with glory, at thy feet
  I'll lay my honors down.

THE HABIT OF DECISION

THE word decision occurs in only one place in the Bible. That is in the third chapter of Joel. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision." This was the valley where issues were settled and judgment was to be passed. To that momentous time Jehovah was bringing the nations. In that valley is where all men ever are.

And so, though the word occurs only here, in the prophecy of Joel, the idea of the significance of our choices, and the importance and supremacy of the act and character of decision, is everywhere in the Bible. God is shown to us as the great chooser, the One who deals with men and nations with positive and firm decision. He is spoken of thus twenty-eight times in Deuteronomy alone. And the true man is set forth as the chooser. "I have chosen the way of faithfulness," he says. "Thine ordinances have I set before me. I cleave unto thy testimonies: . . . Let thy hand be ready to help me; for I have chosen thy precepts." This was the glory

of Daniel and his friends. When they joined the young men in the king's court, they decided that they would not defile themselves, and when, later, they were put to the test of fidelity to their God, they met the test with unflinching decision. To the threat of the fiery furnace they solemnly replied: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Decision was the redeeming quality in the unjust steward. And it was the splendid thing in Paul. He was always straightforward, clear-cut, decisive. It was not his habit to temporize and dawdle. It was his habit at once to seek the will of God and to do it.

The habit of decision is still the great and commanding virtue. The undecided man, the wabbler, is to us the most pathetic and helpless of men. In "David Harum" there was a man who was always distressed when he had to make up his mind. He could not decide what shoes to put on in the morning, and he would get a black shoe on one foot and a tan shoe on the other foot, and then

sit in misery, unable to decide which one to change. The New Testament is strong in its condemnation of the irresolute man. "Be no longer children," it says, "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error." "He that doubteth," adds James, "is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways." How different and how much nobler is the man who can act, who is ever ready for instant and unhesitating action. "I hate this dreadful titter-fritteration of time; I can't stand it any longer," said Samuel C. Armstrong during the war. He was used to decision, to doing things.

Few books have exerted more influence than John Foster's essay on "Decision of Character." That is our great need—such a habit of decision that we shall not waste time and strength in thinking about future decisions, or in devising reasons for not making present decisions, but shall do at once, without delay, what we see to be duty. When our fathers or employers say, "My

boy, will you please do this," we will say, whatever we are doing at the time, not "Excuse me for a moment, please," not "I cannot just now," but "Yes, sir," and do it without loitering. And we need the habit of decision not only as to acts, but also as to character, so that we shall be firm and positive and straight-acting. Some people are this way. They know how to make up their minds and to do directly what they have minded to do. And others are wabblers and hesitators.

Perhaps we say: "Yes, we are among the weak. How can we acquire the habit of decision?"

A house needs a foundation. So does a character. Or rather the house is the foundation plus the structure built upon it. The character runs down, too, to include the foundation. If we want characters of decision we should lay the physical basis for them in clean, active, swift-answering bodies. We can give ourselves a good, wholesome discipline to this end by taking our bodies in hand. With many great men early poverty and necessity did this service for them, and frugality and hard work gave them tough, well-knit, well-purged bodies.

But deliberate choice can take the place of necessity. Paul tells us he took his body in hand and disciplined it. "I buffet my body," he says, "and bring it into bondage." A governed will is not likely to live in an ungoverned body. An alert, determined, quick-working will is more at home in a body held in subjection and taught obedience.

We can help ourselves to become resolute and decided by doing conclusive thinking on our problems. We need to make up our minds on fundamental things and to keep them made up. There are many questions about which we do not need to bother ourselves, and which should not bother us. These we can postpone. But there are others which lie at the very root of things. The questions of the supremacy of truth, of our duty to God and man, of the divinity of Christ, are central questions. We should think of them until we are clear about them, and we should build solidly upon our convictions of truth and act fearlessly in accord with them. If we have no convictions we shall have little character. Decision in conviction will produce decision in character.

If we fix our attention rigidly on virtue,

on truth, on things that are good, we shall find that such thinking breeds decisiveness of action and character. Our wills are given to us for the purpose of directing our thoughts. "The point to which the will is applied is always an idea," says one of our leading psychologists. "The only resistance which our will can possibly experience is the resistance which such an idea offers to being attended to at all." If, accordingly, we will think of good things and of doing good things, and will, as we can, refuse to let our attention turn to bad things or to not doing good things, the rest will take care of itself, or, rather, God who is working in us will take care of it. Paul knew this when, in the counsel he gave the Philippians, he bade them simply to take care of their thoughts. "Whatsoever things," he said, "are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." If they thought thus first, then they would do what he bade, and the God of peace and strength would be with them—the God of decision.

Also we can help ourselves by practice. We can set ourselves by practice to make decision a habit of our life. Professor James has told us how to acquire the good habits we desire. These are some of his suggestions: (1) Make automatic and habitual, as early as possible, as many helpful actions as we can. Get into the way of settling things decisively. (2) We must launch ourselves with as strong and decided an initiative as possible. The new Christian must openly and bravely confess Christ. This will make him surer in his discipleship, and it will make him a firmer and more dauntless character. (3) Never suffer an exception to occur until the new habit is securely rooted in your life. Following this rule with any good habit we wish to acquire will breed decision. (4) Seize the first possible opportunity to act on every resolution you make and every prompting you may experience in the direction of the habits you aspire to gain. (5) Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day. "The man who has daily inured himself to habits of consecrated attention, energetic volition and self-denial in unnecessary things, will stand like a tower when everything rocks around him

and when his softer fellow-mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast."

Unselfishness is a great help to decisiveness of character. It is easier to think quickly for others than it is for ourselves, and if we will set out to do things for other people we will find that we can be decided for them where we were irresolute for ourselves. And unselfishness is itself an essential part of decision. Decision of character involves readiness to do for the right and to die for the right. It is that that marks us as men and that shows that we have achieved the manly character. General Armstrong's negro troops sang this in "The Enlisted Soldier":

> We want no cowards in our band
> That will their colors fly,
> We call for valiant-hearted men
> Who're not afraid to die.
> They look like men. They look like men.
> They look like men of war.
> All armed and dressed in uniform
> They look like men of war.

Are we such men or do we only look like them?

And lastly, the unflinching Christ, who never hesitated, but met all, can take us and make us his. His living Spirit, which

wrought in Simon Peter, who denied him at the taunt of a girl, but a few days later faced the multitude in his name, and died at last in his service, can work also in us the same mighty change from weakness to decision. Shall he not be given freedom to do it?

THE HABIT OF FINDING THE WILL OF GOD

THE most important thing in life to look for is the will of God. Nothing can be of more significance to each of us than his own right life work, which that will assigns. "For what doth it profit a man," asked Jesus, "to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" Which we may interpret to mean, in the language of our own condition, what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world but to miss his life work? God has such a work for each one of us. It is made up of all the works he has for us to do day by day. We need, above all things, the habit of always finding this work.

The strength of life consists in the power of the grip of God's purpose upon us. Has it control of us? The hold of a man upon truth, it has been remarked, is of less consequence than the hold of the truth upon the man. How fast does it hold him? How completely does it dominate him? These are the questions which arise also regarding our lives and the will of God. Does it have a grip upon us? How masterfully does it hold us?

It is all right for us to talk of our purpose for God, but the great reality is God's purpose for us. When we have been absorbed in that, then at last we know what strength and rest are. We lean then not upon the firmness of our resolves, but upon the mighty grasp of God and his will upon our lives.

We have no right to fall into the habit of drifting with regard to the will of God. Many people move along, accepting all that comes without scrutiny, assuming that the path of least effort, least resolution, least resistance, is the will of God. Sometimes it is, and sometimes, oftener, it is not. We are bound to think, to open life to all the divine possibilities, to consider anything that may be able to show that it is the will of God for us. "The family money was in that business," said a young man studying for the ministry, of a great business firm, "and I might have gone in there too. It would have meant a good deal more in the way of return to the family, but I didn't see that that was where I wanted to put my life." So he chose what God chose for him, entirely apart from the natural and obvious thing for him. If we are going to find the will of God we must be willing to look for it where it

is, which will often be where we don't expect to find it.

Many men have been diverted from what they at first wanted and thought was God's will, but found out in time was not. Every man who is following a selfish or evil course will find himself wrenched away from that the moment he seeks the will of God. But even among good men the will of God is constantly a surprise. David Livingstone desired ardently to go to China. He had been interested in China through Gutzlaff. But God's will took him to Africa. Robert Morrison wanted to go to Africa. God's will took him to China. Griffith John wanted to go to Madagascar. But God's will led him to central China. Whoever would habitually follow the will of God must be prepared for surprises—all of them ultimately far better than our original designs.

And now, assuming that we are willing to follow the will of God, how may we get into the habit of knowing what it is?

(1) First, then, however great our problems ahead may be, there is always some small duty near. The first thing is to do that, to get into the habit of always doing that. That will lead on to the next thing.

Life is a unity. It may look like a chaos and tangle, but it is one, not a heap of detached items. It is rather like a long twine. What we need to do is to take hold where we can and work straight along. So in finding duty we need to accept the present task. To shirk our present assignment blinds us for seeing future assignment. The acceptance of present duty teaches us the habit of doing all duty, of ever knowing God's will.

(2) Think carefully of the reasons for and against the various possible courses of action, and balance them as well as you can. In his reminiscences, John D. Rockefeller tells how, in the early years of the Standard Oil Company, he and his associates were always ready to consider and to discuss any proposal whatever. They were looking for the best methods, and never took it for granted that there were no better ones than those they were following. If men act in this way in business, much more in the supreme thing of all ought we to be open-minded and thoughtful.

(3) Seek unselfish, disinterested and high-minded counsel. Many people ask advice of those who will not counsel them impartially, but whose judgment is biased by desire.

And even when they ask disinterested counsel, it is not always high-minded. People who do not themselves live in the will of God, and who have no habit of regarding it, are poor people to consult.

(4) Above all others whom we consult, we should advise with God through prayer. His counsel is worth more than that of anyone else, and he is ready to give it. Because of our own ignorance, our helplessness and impatience, because of the spiritual hindrances without and within with which only prayer can cope, because God knows what we cannot know and makes his knowledge available for our guidance, we ought to seek the habit of discernment of duty through prayer.

(5) We should put off all unnecessary decisions as to details. Such details usually take care of themselves in any case. But we should settle, as soon as possible, the great questions of principle. God's custom is to show not the end of the way, but the way. What will come later on in the way we must not ask. We must settle now the direction of the way. The earlier we decide the better, for the sake of our character, for the sake of our preparation for the future,

for the sake of our influence now. We have no such assurance of the future as will warrant us in putting off the acceptance of God's true will for our lives.

(6) Let us keep ever before us the Scripture principles of duty-knowing and duty-doing: "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness"; "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal"; "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal"; "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is." In all things let Jesus Christ "have the preëminence." The higher our hearts are lifted above the material and transient, the more fully and joyfully and naturally will they move among men, ruling the present world and not being ruled by it.

(7) Let us habitually ask what is morally right and face this question unflinchingly and under the scrutiny of Christ. What society approves is of no great consequence. The important question is, "What is in accord with the character of God?" Right-

cousness is not the consensus of opinion. It is what Christ is. We shall always recognize God's will if we always see God in Christ and test all things in that presence.

(8) We must not be timid about taking chances. Faith is a venture. It is a reasonable venture—far more reasonable than unwillingness to take the venture—but still it is a venture. If we never leap into the dark we shall never find eternal life or eternal service here, or the Eternal City hereafter. The will of God is not a visible and material object. It is a way of the soul. Only the soul's eyes can discern it. The habit of seeing it is the habit of seeing with the inward vision.

(9) We can fortify the habit of doing God's will by ever choosing the personal duties. Jesus always did this. He was always accessible to souls. No enterprise was more important to him than the service of souls, of living persons. Personal duty should always be given the preference by us. As over against any general, indefinite, institutional calls, there are always the calls of particular men, women and children. These are the important things. If we get into the habit of finding people who need

help and of helping them, we shall be following the religion of God, as James defines it.

(10) There are two selves in each of us —a superior and an inferior. We are never in any doubt as to which is which. We may be in doubt as to some outer problem, but we know the better nature in us. What does it require? The better within us can never be satisfied save by the will of God.

(11) Lastly, almost everything will depend on how commanding the conception of duty is with us. If our habit is to do duty, and in our minds and hearts we exalt duty as the loftiest thing in life, we shall be able to find what each particular duty is much more easily than if the whole notion of duty is slovenly and careless. If we regard the will of God as the one commanding thing, and habitually order our lives by the desire to do it, we shall have no trouble in acquiring the habit of recognizing always what it is.

There could be no greater or finer habit than this. We have a fine old hymn which exalts it in the one noble line:

> To do Thy will the habit of my heart.

Is it the habit of our hearts?

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01127 7508

DATE DUE

NOV 2 '70

JUN 15 1988

JUN 15 1987

OCT 31 1995

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.